

MAIDEN VERSES

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MAIDEN VERSES



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MAIDEN VERSES

BY

TILLY ASTON

MELBOURNE

A. H. MASSINA & CO., PRINTERS
HOWEY STREET

1901



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LILIAN.

AMONG the wooded hills of Anglesea,
Where flows the silent Goulburn from its home ;
Where thousand gum-trees rustle in the wind,
Two fathers of Australian industry
Had set their family hearths, and thriven well.
The one had but a daughter to his house,
A tall, fair maid, of twenty summers' bloom.
Our Southern sun and free activity
Had made her rounded cheek a rosy cream,
And given to her eyes a lustre soft ;
And Lilian was the name her father gave.

Edward was eldest of their neighbour's sons,
A kindly youth, of disposition bright,
And he loved Lilian, and had told her so ;
And found an answering passion in her heart,
And she had pledged herself to be his wife.

One bright November day of latest Spring
He came to beg that she would with him ride,
And see how fair the fading hues of grass,
How deep the green upon the drooping boughs.

No worse a rider than himself was she,
And to her bounding horse with yielding grace
Her lishesome figure moved harmoniously.
Along the half-made road they cantered on,
Then turned aside a bushy track to find ;
And there the brilliance of Australian life
They saw, untrammeled by the arts of man.
The red and white gum, and the peppermint,
And fragrant blossom'd box profusely grew ;
And 'mid their boughs the gleaming parrots danced,
And lit the varied green with colours gay,
And screamed and chattered in an ecstasy.
And Lilian joined her laughter with the rest ;
A merry maiden of the South was she,
For now her senses thrilled in every chord,
Responsive to the joy in all around.
Now forth she darted, looking back the while,
To show her horse's greater strength and speed ;
And Edward urged his noble beast along,
Drawn by the beacon of her sparkling eye.
Calm was the day ; no zephyr shook the leaves,
But suddenly a deafening crash was heard,
And Edward saw, with blanching cheek and lip,
A heavy tree across the roadway fall.
Upon its downward sweep a cruel branch
Carried sweet Lilian from her horse's back,
And pinned her to the ground. An instant passed,
Then Edward from his saddle quickly slid,
And strove to move the crushing weight of wood.

It seemed to laugh his single strength to naught ;
So home he sped to bring the needed help.
Alas ! poor Lilian ! For thy fate is hard,
And better it had seemed for thee to die ;
But neither we nor thou can choose thy lot,
'Tis ours, and thine, to bear and not to choose.
That day was Lilian's last of health and hope,
For always after was she invalid,
Not able e'en to pass from room to room,
Unless a strong arm bore her drooping frame.
They told her it must ever be the same,
And she in silence heard the tidings dread,
And on the pillow turned her white, wan face,
Resolved to meet her sorrow in herself.
And Edward often came to comfort her,
But Lilian dreaded more than welcomed him ;
For with a woman's quick perception she
Discovered in his love a changing tone,
Born of the knowledge that she ne'er could wed.
She knew her hand must be the one to wrench
The bond his manly honour would not break ;
But loth was she to send him from her side,
And fearful was the struggle in her heart.
Through many nights she heard the mopeke call,
Or listened to the dreary, mourning pines
That grew beside the gateway of the house ;
And she would weep the lonely hours away,
And to herself would say—" My own ! my own !
How can I give him up ? And yet I must.

For how can I, a wreck, a broken thing,
 Wedded to bitter grief and suffering,
 Hope to retain the love I had so late ?
 'Twere grossest wrong to hold him bound to me,
 For I can never, never be his wife.
 O God ! be pitiful, and teach my heart
 The patient resignation of its hope !"

And then, amid the wailing of the pines,
 More hopefully the white acacias sang,
 And she would say—" Perhaps the creeping days
 Will bring me more contentment as they pass.
 And Edward—he will find another bride."
 And at the thought her white and wasted hands
 Would clench themselves beneath the snowy sheets,
 And Lilian would sob and moan again,
 "I cannot, O ! I cannot give him up !"

So passed the long, hot summer time away,
 And still she lingered o'er her dreaded task,
 Knowing full well it must be done at last.

Pain self-inflicted is the cruellest pain,
 Because the power of shirking or delay
 Is in the hand of him who holds the knife ;
 And he who doth anticipate a pang
 Doth suffer most while thus he fears and waits.

When April's sunny days were shortening,
And evenings chilly told the winter nigh,
Edward would carry Lilian to a lounge
Beneath the wide verandah's shading roof,
Where she could hear the little wagtail sing,
And laugh to see him shake his pretty tail
With antics comical, and breathe the scent
Of ripened quinces hanging on the boughs.
One afternoon she turned upon her couch
And said, with straining eye and quivering lip,
"Edward, you've waited patiently till I
Should grant release from our betrothal vow ;
To-day must end this intercourse of ours,
And you in future shall my brother be."

But he, perceiving that she suffered much,
Strove by a gentle look to stay her words,
And cried, "Another day, dear Lilian,
Will serve as well to say what you intend.
And do you think that I have lost my love ?
No. If my staying brings you happiness,
Then will I stay forever at your side."
"Your heart was ever large," she murmured low,
"But I would scorn a love that's mixed with pity ;
Such love would be unworthy, too, of you.
To see you sacrifice your life to me
Would make me more unhappy than that you
Should be my friend, and find another wife.

Now, Edward, I am free, and you are free ;
For as I am so must I always be.
'Twas hard to say, but I have conquered self,
And am content that I have done the right."
His manly eyes were brimming o'er with tears,
And, bending down, he kissed her forehead twice,
And said, " My dearest sister and my friend !"
And she replied, " My brother and my friend !"
And with the words their love-life died away.

When Springtime drew the blossoms from the trees,
Edward departed from the Goulburn vale,
And journeyed forth to sojourn in the north,
Upon the wide and fertile Murray downs.
And letters filled with sweet, fraternal love
Passed down to Lilian, and from Lilian back,
And thus four years went down to join the past.
And then there came from Edward's pen a note,
That told of his approaching wedding-day.
It said, " If Lilian but bless us both,
Then shall our happiness be perfected ;
And she shall have a sister in my wife,
Whose love and interest shall be as my own."
Then Lilian lay with shut eyes, silently,
Until her mother, coming in, espied
The letter on the floor, and picked it up,
And read it through, and cried, " Alas ! the fool,
If he must wed, he might have held his peace !"

But the pale sufferer roused herself and said,
“ Nay, mother, nay ! You must not blame him thus;
It is but right that he should send and ask
A sister’s blessing on his wedded life.”
The mother wept for pity of her child,
But for herself the daughter could not weep,
Stunned by devouring, jealous agony,
That showed how vain had been her former strife.
And now each day revealed her frailty grown ;
The mother saw, with ever sadder eyes,
Their one dear daughter drooping like a plant
Exhausted by the scorching northern wind.
And Lilian spoke no word of murmuring,
And smiled her love to all who came and went,
And sent to Edward loving messages,
Too weakly grown to write to him herself.

Bravely, though half afraid, she welcomed him
Who is appointed by the All-supreme
To bear our spirits to their other home ;
And tenderly he touched her broken frame,
And showed himself with angel’s gentle face.
Only a sigh, that stirred her parted lips ;
The pine-trees echoed it ; and peaceful rest
Shone on the marble forehead of the maid.

THE FIRSTBORN.

BEHOLD ! the morn is smiling on the earth,
And blushing flowers tell the time is Spring,
In dainty revels with the breathing air,
And silent laughter at the glinting light,
And every dancing bird must take a share
In merry-making with the world new-born.
No less a joy within the home is seen
Upon the beaming faces of a pair
Who dwell together, bound by law and love ;
For they are now partaking of the bliss
Of new parental passion, pain, and hope ;
This morn has brought their firstborn infant home—
A son, conceived in ecstasy of love,
Brought forth in fear, in agony, and tears,
Receiving life from mother and from sire,
Inheriting the character of each,
Holding within its tiny, helpless form
The undeveloped embryos of gifts.
The mother, with her wan face all abeam,
Is saying, “ He must copy all the good
That is abundant in his father’s heart ;
He must be nobly honest to a thought,
And gentle in his temper ; strong, yet kind ;
Indeed, each virtue that his father wears
Must be entailed upon our firstborn son.”

And he, with no less joy, but more concealed,
Is praying that the child may bless the name
He bears ; that he may ever hold most dear
Honour and truth, men's holiest ornaments ;
That he may one day be the filial guard
Of her who gave the precious gift of life.

Now come the days wherein to watch for signs
Of mild intelligence in veiled blue eyes,
The gladness at the first suspected smile,
And wonder as the smile-bud blossoms out ;
The growing interest in the objects near,
Until the plantlet of a human mind
Is surely thriving well within the child.

The little body, with its white, round limbs,
All dimpled as the rosy, smiling face,
Is ever fairer in the mother's sight ;
She thinks the blue eyes ever bluer grown,
Till she supposes all the world who sees
Must vote her baby first among the babes.
Then what a wraith that early sickness is ;
The parents feel its shadow o'er their heads,
And should the child be called away to Heaven,
Would any joy be left in human life ?
Nothing ; for baby is their all in all.
Poor, blinded ones ! You have each other's love.
Again the shadow lifts, the infant lives,
'Twas but a passing ailment, quickly gone ;

And older heads may smile to see their cares,
Forgetting how they once were like distraught.
And here a new delight will tremble forth ;
The child is feeling for a solid hold
Whereon to set his pretty, dimpled feet.
And then will follow that first doubtful step,
And baby will be walking off alone,
The proud proprietor of two small legs.
The sweet, soft mouth is learning duty, too,
The tongue can lisp a few imperfect words,
Which mother thinks are raptures musical.

The charm is broken by the first deceit,
A petty theft or falsehood boldly lisped ;
Surprise to see the baby's shamelessness
Is mingled with the pain of finding sin
So soon besetting childish innocence.

Events unmeaning to the outer world
Fill up the years that bring the babe to boy,
The parents fondly watching every act,
That no stray spark of genius may escape
Unnoted which will point his future path.
Perhaps the boy is gifted with a mind,
Or skill of hand may be his certain part ;
But with the throng of mischief-working lads
His lot is for a pleasant season cast ;
Of learning he secures a doubtful share,

And fun is ever foremost in his brain ;
But here, perchance, a turning point is found,
An act that ill befits the honourable
Is justly charged to him ; and when at home
The father gravely takes the rod of pain
And gives the first cool-blooded chastisement.
The son is lowly bowed 'neath weighting shame,
And bears the thrashing with courageous mien ;
O, may it be the only heavy cloud
That comes to shade the love 'twixt sire and son,
The one great lesson of a manly life,
The rousing of a sense of right and wrong !

When he has come to manhood he will know
That he who gave the beating suffered more
Than he whose reformation was designed.

School ended, he must look about to find
The path of toil where he shall spend his life ;
A few years' preparation, then a start,
And he is launched upon his own resource.
He may be born to bless the whole wide world
With some great power within him from his birth—
A mighty healer, preacher, thinker, all
Or one of these ; or he may simply be
A humble artisan or labourer,
A toiler in a low, unhonoured place ;
Still, if he does that well, whate'er he does

The parents glory in his humble skill ;
He is their firstborn son, their cherished son,
Whate'er he touches has a glamour won.
And so it is with all, both high and low !
In after times he loves a chosen maid,
And suffers all the fears and hopes of love,
Till she, consenting, gives him confidence,
And home parental is the joy behind,
And nuptial bower the bliss that is before.
And thus he tastes the sweets he came to bring,
But in the coming of his own firstborn,
Enacting once again the drama old,
The oft-repeated, yet the ever new.

QUEEN ESTHER'S MEDITATION.

HOT noontide slumber held the city still,
And gave a respite to the toiling hands ;
And through the palace gliding moved the slaves
Who served the lovely Esther, Persia's Queen.
And 'mid the restful hush their lady sat,
Perplexed, and with herself she thus communed :
" I fain would do what Mordecai bids,
And plead the cause of Israel's broken race,
But how can I the courage find ? For he,
My royal lord, is hedged about with laws
Of social usage not to be defied.
And over me the shadow of a cloud
Doth ever seem to rest ; and thirty days
Have passed since last the King did show me grace,
Or cast his glance of love into my eyes.
And though he loved me well, how may I know
That I am still in favour with my lord ?
And, doubting, can I venture at his feet
To throw myself, and show my kin and race ?
What if his mighty hand should make no stir
To hold the golden sceptre to his queen !
Then death must be my portion, and the Jews,
My brethren in the faith, must perish, too.
I was not loth to listen to the voice
Of Mordecai when he bade me come
And offer here my beauty for a crown ;

He promised power, riches, love, and all
That goeth to the making up of joy,
And what he promised I have well received.
But Haman now hath won my royal lord,
And whispers in his ears such flatteries,
That he, the greatest monarch in the earth,
Is deaf to other sounds. With cunning schemes
This Haman hath his cruel vengeance sought,
And for a petty wound of vanity,
A little grievance of his haughty pride,
He seeks a nation's blood, and offers up
Upon the altar of his selfishness
A hundred thousand of the innocent.
And here my kinsman hath entreated me
To save the Hebrew people and myself ;
And surely, if I had my liege's love,
As when I came a virgin to his arms,
I should not fear to intercede ; but now,
If I before the King unbidden go,
Straightway I die. I have been well content
To live, the favoured and the best beloved
Of great Ahasuerus ; I have dreamed
'Mid all the pleasures of his gorgeous court,
And still may hold my royal estate in peace,
If unrevealed the secret of my birth.
I seek not death ; I fear its mystic realm,
Yet to present me at my husband's throne
Will be the opening of its gruesome doors.
But, listen ! In the courtyard someone sings ;

It is my maiden, Zillah, as she tends
The precious flowers growing in the shade.
I have forgotten all those cherished songs
That once I learned to praise Jehovah's name ;
But gentle Zillah hath a braver heart
Than Esther, who hath hid her very name.”

HYMN.

As from the vase the flowing stream
Raiseth the flower's drooping head,
So doth His plenteous life restore
The soul with sorrow well-nigh dead.

As in the Heavens the glowing sun
Driveth afar the gloom of night,
So doth His ever rising love
Shed in the soul a glorious light.

As doth the strong and lofty wall
The trusting citizens defend,
So doth the Lord encircle them
Who seek His aid and name Him friend.

If God is life, and love, and power,
Why should we fear when foemen boast ?
For He is stronger far than they,
And greater than a kingdom's host.

Then rose the pride of Persia's loveliness,
With firm resolve upon her beauteous face,
No more uncertain of the path that lay
Beneath her feet : her gentle eyes agleam
With purpose high and sacrificial love.

"Yea, Lord," she cried, "Thy arm is strong to save,
And in Thy strength I venture e'en to die,
If so it needs must be. I will attire
This form the King was wont to praise as fair
In all the glory of my richest robes,
And with a humble mien will bow myself
Where my great lord may see me. Yea, who knows,
As saith my kinsman, but that I am sent
Unto the royal favour for this end,
That I may be my people's saviour now,
And turn the plots of Haman on himself.
I to the King will go, and if his wrath
Withholds the golden sceptre and my life,
Then if I perish, I must perish, calm,
And well content to die with all my kin."

RECOLLECTIONS OF WARRNAMBOOL.

I SOJOURNED for a space at Warrnambool,
And spent the days in busy intercourse
With minds of varied training, type, and bent,
The chance associates of my then-time life.
I love the haunts of men and human sounds,
I am more happy with my fellows near ;
And solemn gladness more than merry joy
Is mine 'mid Nature unfulfilled by man.
So was I solemnised when night came down,
And all the whirl of life was stayed by sleep,
To hear the ripping roar upon the rocks,
The thudding thunder of the ocean's edge.
And slumber held its finger o'er my nerves,
But touched them not ; and I would conjure up
A thousand thoughts and queer imaginings,
All blending with the turmoil on the shore.
Often the undulating air would bring
To me, with rise and fall, the mighty sound ;
And instant fancy bred a shrinking fear
Lest, yielding to the sea, the land should sink—
Lest our Australian isle should now repeat
The doom of great Atlantis of the west,
Whose memory is as fable in our ears
As ours would be to generations hence.

Next would I dwell upon the dreary shores,
Where these same waters lapped a moon ago ;
The polar lands where men are ever bent,
And are repulsed by rigour of their snows.
Then thoughts of shipwreck horrors, drowning men,
And cries of helpless women, crowd along ;
And then I feel I hate the grinding waves,
And stop my ears to keep away the sound.
Or else the glorious dignity appeals
To that within me, reverential, deep ;
And I perceive that every rolling surge
Is but a blow struck in a battle royal.
There is a contest for the mastery
Fought by the ocean 'gainst the braving land.
Ages have watched the never-ceasing strife ;
Ages will pass before it has an end.
With many savage charges on its foe
The sea renews the conflict, then retires,
Shredded and frayed by each projecting rock,
While stands the coast, derisive and unmoved.
I knew the lighthouse lamp was glowing still,
Smiling to see the baffled waves withdraw,
Then rise again with vicious hopelessness,
Only to break, and fall, and ebb away.
And 'mid these passing fancies I would find
The noisy rushing to a murmur fall,
And sleep would reign until the morrow called,
And all forgotten roared the restless tide.

THE POWER OF BEAUTY.

WE walked along the winding path that creeps
About the gorge's steep and rugged side,
And, wandering on, we stood at last to look
Right down upon the river's rushing tide.

Our only converse was the silent touch,
For who could talk 'mid Nature's majesty ?
When every sound is writing on the soul
The mystic imprint of eternity.

And then my friend grew pitiful, and said—
“ Never till now I knew how much the blind
Have lost in losing sight ; nor yet how great
The pleasure we who see in seeing find.

“ I would that I might lend you now my eyes,
That on your mind they could impress the scene !
The terraced hills, where softly sits the town,
The blended light and shade of this ravine.

“ Behind us is a wall that rises up
To dizzy heights, all mantled o'er with moss
And bracken fern, whose crisp and spreading fronds
Seem burnished bright to green metallic gloss.

" And farther on the wall is torn apart
By mimic gully, where the maiden-hair,
With many a light, transparent, waving strand,
Turns every crevice to a bower fair.

" I would that for a space the veil could rise,
And you behold the river's gleaming course ;
How fierce it hurries through the narrow gap,
And braves the leaning banks like flying horse !

" And where the water leaves the rocky ledge,
It carries with it swarming specks of spray,
Till one might think that cherry blossom strewed
The river's deeper tints of silver grey."

Her admiration passed the power of words,
And silence gave us time to think and feel ;
While fervid awe and calmer reverence
Placed on our hearts their everlasting seal.

Then I began—" Your wish is now fulfilled,
Dear friend, and on my mind is laid the scene,
I have beheld the gentle town-clad hills,
And rugged grandeur, too, of this ravine,

" All by your words imprinted ; yet I say,
That ere you spoke I knew the place was fair,
For knowledge of its loveliness had sunk
Deep, deep within my soul to linger there.

“ Your words have made more vivid and more clear
Each detail ; yet I feel no more delight
Than at that sense of beauty mystical
Which came unaided by your clearer sight.

“ 'Tis surely folly to assume that God
Has placed the only medium in the eye
Whereby our inner selves receive the good
Found in the glories of the earth and sky.

“ Each human sense within our bodies stored
Becomes the vehicle of outer things,
And soft impressions touch on every nerve,
Sending a message to their very springs.

“ Beauty is not the vision satisfied,
But something deeper, planted in the soul—
A longing for the spirit perfected,
For something not unfinished, something whole.

“ If not, then why do we conceive in things
Invisible the type of all that's fair ?
What is the beauty, then, of holiness,
The loveliness of mercy's tender care ?

“ Who hath beheld the mansions of the blest ?
Yet Heaven is our beauty's goal and end ;
And what more glorious than the love of God ?
So glorious that we cannot comprehend.

" If colour's pleasures I have been denied,
I feel the touch of Nature on my mind,
And in the roaring triumph of the flood
A victory over circumstance I find.

" If I were deaf and helpless, dumb and blind,
I would not be an outcast from the light ;
For God another channel would provide
By which could enter streams of pure delight."

THE COTTAGE BY THE "PLENTY."

THERE is a power in pathos that entwines
Itself about our hearts, and bids us mourn
With every human soul that has a grief,
And every life by sorrow made forlorn.

Hush not in scorn the sympathetic sigh,
Nor quell the pitying teardrops when they start ;
For what I tell is no fictitious tale,
But the sad story of a broken heart.

Close where the Plenty dabbles on its way,
And makes among the rocks its music sweet,
There is a lovely garden running wild
With arum lily, rose, and marguerite.

Neat is the dwelling in the midst thereof,
With its verandah latticed at the end,
Where climbs a yellow rose, whose golden blooms
Through every season with the greenery blend.

She for whose deep delight this home was made
Never beheld its simple, rural grace ;
For on her wedding-day the angry sea
Hid her forever 'neath its shining face.

She was the daughter in a city home,
Nor boasted much the charm of outward look ;
Only her dark eyes showed, perchance, a leaf
Of her sweet spirit's rarely opened book.

Gentleness was her beauty, love her grace,
Mercy the garment that adorned her life,
And these were better than the fairest form
To him who sought the maiden for a wife.

What anxious pain when watching for a sign
That would assure his passion well received ;
What jealous judgments, when he thought she
smiled
On others, yet how soon to be reprieved.

And then they gave each other promises,
And he returned to put his house in trim ;
While she went dreamily about her work,
With eyes that alternated bright and dim.

Glad be the bride on whom the sun doth shine,
Telling of happiness that is to come ;
Thus dawned the wedding-day of her for whom
The rural cottage was to be a home.

'Mid noonday glory in her father's house
The maiden was in happy wedlock given,
And earnest vows were breathed before the world
Which long since had been sealed by love in
Heaven.

Then the departure from her childhood's home ;
A hundred farewells passed from lip to lip ;
And then the hasty drive to where the boat
Waited to take them on their wedding trip.

When evening came the sea-wind made a storm,
The ocean raised its hissing crests on high ;
And every wave sang death to those on board,
And smote like thunder as it passed them by.

The water-mountains struck, and struck again,
Then rushed away to battle with the land ;
Man made the ship, and God hath made the sea—
The human yields when God uplifts His hand.

But hasten we to end the piteous tale :
Soon were they cast upon the raging sea ;
And him the storm laid safely on the shore,
But she was carried to eternity.

So he returned to live his lonely life
Where wave the wattles by the Plenty tide ;
And in a sweet delusion toils he on
To make a bower of beauty for his bride.

He hath a broken heart ; but slow content
Has come to him with the disordered brain ;
And surely there will be a wedding morn
When he and his dear maiden meet again.

“AND THE EYES OF THE BLIND SHALL
BE OPENED.”

BESIDE the city gate they sat to beg,
Where passed the crowd, on trade or pleasure
bent ;
And with the sound of bartering and jest
Their plaintive cry for charity was blent.

The creaking of the laden camel train,
The click of sandaled feet upon the stones,
The passing lady by her servants borne,
Each in their turn called forth the self-same tones.

“ Alms for the blind men, brothers ; ye who see,
O, cheer the hearts of those whose light is out ;
Alms for the blind men, O, my noble lords !
Ye pharisees, whom all proclaim devout.

“ Alms for the blind men, O, my lady fair,
They are in shadow, you are in the sun ;
If God has smitten us, we know not why ;
Thanks, lady, may the like to you be done.”

In answer to the call the bounty came
From hearts that pitied, yet despised their state ;
For was their blindness not the sign of shame—
Of wrath divine the manifested weight ?

The elder beggar showed the touch of years
In stooping form and hair with silver lined ;
And in his downcast face the gazer saw
A hopeless grief with bitter shame combined.

The younger wore a more defiant mien,
And sullen words were ever on his tongue ;
A rebel instinct taught his angry heart
To hate the world because it did him wrong.

These two had been among the honoured sons
Of Judah ; life had smiled with much of cheer,
And hopes well-founded for a good old age,
Filled with the blessings that we hold most dear.

Then came this dread affliction's bitterness,
And with it came the crueler social ban ;
What woe it was to find the chosen maid
Given in wedlock to another man !

But, as the people pass, the beggars hear
Their busy talk about a Teacher great ;
Most speak of Him with reverence and awe,
But some with curses born of jealous hate.

They learn His name is Jesus ; that He heals
The fever-stricken and the maimed and lame ;
That demons leave the tortured frame and flee,
Smitten with terror at His very name.

Then said the younger beggar, " If, perchance,
 This mighty prophet turns His footsteps here,
 I will be bold to ask His gracious word,
 I with beseechings will assail His ear.

" For if with but a touch He heals the sick,
 And devils from His presence flee in fright,
 He is of God, and surely hath the power
 With but His finger to restore our sight.

" What would it mean if we were made to see ?
 O, brother, do you tremble as I speak ?
 No more an outcast from our father's house,
 Compelled a shameful livelihood to seek.

" Think of the glories of the Heaven above,
 The rich, blue gleam of yonder Galilee,
 The Heaven that shineth in our fellows' eyes !
 All may be ours if we this Jesus see.

" They say He graciously receiveth all ;
 Is not our case as needy as the rest ?
 If He is merciful, as many say,
 He will not turn Him coldly from our quest."

This was their constant converse till the day
 When Jesus journeyed to their countryside ;
 Then all the city thronged to see the man
 Whose mighty name was spoken far and wide.

And with them went the beggars from the gate,
The younger dragging on his feebler friend,
And thrusting back the crowd with mighty arm,
As mountain winds the supple branches bend.

But ere they reached the centre of their hopes,
Jairus, the ruler, had besought His aid,
And prayed, with sobs of deep, paternal love,
That He would come and heal his little maid.

“ Then we will wait Him at the ruler’s door.”
So back they toil ’mid crowd and din and dust.
“ Cheer, brother, cheer ! He hears both rich and
poor,
We’ll follow Him till evening if we must !”

Thus, after many hours of weary strife,
They stood before the noble ruler’s door ;
But from the crowd the sound of sneering rose,
And many a voice the signs of anger wore.

“ He says the maid is sleeping. Sleep, forsooth !
When death has quenched the sunlight in her
eyes ;
Asleep, indeed ! Who knows not death from sleep ?
This upstart rabbi thinks Him wondrous wise.”

Amid the clamouring the door unclosed,
And calmly walked the Saviour from the place ;
While fell a fearsome hush, intensified
By the strange glory shining on His face.

He passed unheeding where the blind men stood,
 Nor seemed their suppliant attitude to see ;
 Perchance His ears were filled with sounds from
 Heaven,
 That quelled the accents of a human plea.

Nay, Lord, we know the man whose thoughts of
 Heaven

Shut up his heart 'gainst suffering and pain,
 Falls short of that divine ideal Thou wert,
 And lacks the power his longed-for Heaven to
 gain.

Along the street the Master took His way,
 The beggars followed, crying as they go,
 "O, Son of David, pity on us take ;
 O, Son of David, mercy on us show !

"O, David's Son, Thy servants crave Thy grace,
 O, Son of David, pity us, we pray !"
 But Jesus turned not till he reached the house
 Where friendly host had bidden Him to stay.

But then, ah ! then, the Saviour's hand was laid
 Upon the trembling shoulders of the pair ;
 And gently drawing them within the house,
 He checked their prayers with courteous words
 and fair.

O, strong their faith, and great the blessing won !
They stand upon the street with healed eyes ;
O, joy of brightness, happiness of day !
What ecstasies from every object rise !

" O, see," they cry, " the white, white houses gleam,
Surely the sky was never yet so blue !
And see that baby with its gentle face,
'Tis beauty perfected, 'tis beauty true !

" O, brother, see how clear the setting sun
Lies down upon his smooth, transparent bed !
How gorgeous are the lurid rays of light
That form the tresses of his golden head.

" Come to the housetop, where our eyes may scan
The sloping pastures and the noble trees ;
I long my wakened spirit to refresh
With draughts of God's good mercies such as these.

" How fair and glad the land of mortals is
To eyes just opened from the gloom of night ;
Even the narrow streets are all aglow,
Touched by the colours of departing light.

" But fairer than the world that's visible
Is self-respect restored within the mind ;
No more the begging, cringing mendicant,
No more the pitied and despised blind.

"The Prophet bade us hold in peace our joy ;
We will not ; nay, it is not in our power !
The Lord of Hosts be praised for the bliss,
The God of lights be blessed for this hour !

"Thanks be to God, who sent His Prophet down
To heal the broken hearts and raise the dead,
Whose pity more than mother's tender is,
Whose touch is healing, and whose word is bread.

"Glory to God, Jehovah ! He is great,
Whose hand can stay the stars and weigh the sun ;
Yet who hath writ His mercy on our lives,
And is our Father, though the Holy One."

AUSTRALIA.

WE have no history of olden time ;

We are the youngest born of mother earth ;
Not in her days of bridal, but her prime,

She gave this land of warmth and sunbeams
birth.

Our past is buried in the vault of years,

The sleeper rests in silence in his bed ;
Nor ruthless hand of antiquary fears,

For hidden are the dwellings of the dead.

No carven tomb nor monument reveals

The early history of its dying race ;
Nor legend quaint the hidden truth conceals
Of men and things of prehistoric days.

Without a past, what will the future be ?

In our own hands we have the power to make
This land a home of native liberty,
A place where tyrant ills are made to quake—

A place where men are not confined by laws

Forced on them by conventionality ;
But let each for his actions know a cause,

And exercise his right, a judgment free.

Not liberty that is to license kin,
The uncontrolléd exercise of will ;
But duly subjected to discipline,
Lest by one's freedom others suffer ill.

This is the country of our fathers' choice,
Where green are hills and vales, and blue the sky ;
A land where plenty loves to raise her voice,
And all abundance is for heart and eye.

The noblest, tallest trees, the brightest flowers,
The wanton Spring, the Summer resting-time,
The sunny days, that warm the Winter hours,
Are each in turn the glory of our clime.

These are the spirits, with a thousand more,
Who give us lessons in the art of mirth,
Until we earn, through love of pleasure's store,
The censure of the patriarchs of earth.

Yet, O, ye grave ones, let our youth excuse,
It is but fitting that the young should play ;
Let thoughtful fathers moralise and muse,
But let the children have their joyous day.

To youth belongs the power to aspire—
Take not our youth and all its train of friends ;
And if we sometimes boast what we acquire,
Our wiser years will one day make amends.

My pride delights to conjure up the days
When we no more shall strive to imitate ;
But, as a people, learn a nation's ways,
A great descendant of our Mother State.

If we have glory, what shall be its cause ?
I hear one singer of the South who cries,
That only when this land can boast its wars,
Will it be great in other nations' eyes.

But this is certain, that the few are they
Who reap the glory of the battle won ;
But aching hearts and woe is theirs who stay
In homes bereavéd when the war is done.

Let not our greatness be of death, but life,
Our battles wordy, mended with a smile ;
Let commerce be our only form of strife,
And secret ills the victims of our guile.

DESERTION.

SOME years ago, no matter now how many,
My path across another's path was thrown ;
We stayed awhile to linger with each other,
And thus we stayed till passion's flower had
grown.

In ardent words he urged me him to marry,
Nor lacked he means to furnish me the best ;
And I, but half reviewing all the future,
The longed-for answer gave to his request.

The days went pleasantly, I will acknowledge,
But now arose a truth I could not wring ;
I had to own that he, my lord affianced,
Was not my equal in a single thing.

So I forswore the pride of being wedded
Where patronage would hold, and not esteem,
And so we on our former way departed,
To leave behind us all our pleasant dream.

Some cried—" For shame ! to thus deceive a lover."
And others chided my inconstancy ;
All pitied him whom I had left unhappy,
Nor dreamed the wrench had caused a pang to
me.

Ah ! well, he found another consolation,
A wife with tastes and habits like his own ;
And now, I doubt not, sees my just decision
Was made for him, and not for me alone.

Which is the greater evil—to have cherished
A pledge on only half acquaintance based,
Or to have given both of us our freedom,
To find a sphere where we are better placed ?

A LESSON ON SORROW.

WITH reason stunned, and senses all ajar,
And hope by sorrow on the altar laid,
I strove to pry into the gloomy shade
That veils the wherefore of the things that mar.

For many days I questioned in my heart,
And doubted, thinking God no father kind ;
I needed comfort, yet could nothing find
To salve my wound and take away its smart.

I craved to learn why she, the young and good,
Was taken from her children and her love,
When earth seemed almost blest as Heaven above
With happy wedlock and a cheerful mood.

What purpose, if a purpose truly lies,
Behind the weary bitterness of pain ?
This theme I pondered o'er and o'er in vain,
As many others than myself more wise.

But soon, when met in merry company,
One said how in his garden he had grown
A lurid lily, from whose leaves were blown
The sickly odours of mortality.

Straightway I asked myself the reason why
The one fair lily had a fragrant breath,
While from another rose the stench of death,
In loathsome waves that greet the passer-by.

The fragrance for the honey-seeking bee ;—
But Nature gives the bee her lawful share
Of toil ; and leaves for others to prepare
Full many an embryo for maturity.

And this unsavoury flower is dear, perchance,
To some of these ; and breathing on the air,
It brings unto itself the needed care
Of wingéd nurses that about it dance.

“ Two things averse for single purpose given ”—
I had the secret to unlock the gate ;
And for the opened door I now can wait
Until I learn all mysteries in Heaven.

TO AN INFANT.

A THING of wondrous mystery I hold,
Nestled in confidence upon my breast ;
A sweet young infant do my arms enfold,
Whose gentle breath bespeaks a gentler rest.

Too young to know the tender words I speak,
Yet with a smile she doth to mine respond ;
And softly straying fingers o'er my cheek
Have power to wake in me a passion fond.

Maternal instinct is not theirs alone
Who by their travail give the world a son ;
It is a passion other women own
Whose lives this joyous honour have not won.

At least I wonder who could touch a child
And not desire to kiss, and kiss again ;
O, baby, when I feel your presence mild,
This impulse in me is akin to pain.

Your memory is sleeping, and your mind
Lies dormant for great possibilities ;
It may be that the future years will find
A sphere for you 'mid their activities.

But, stay, O dreams, and to the present turn ;
I mark a perfect trust in all around ;
And this is why we o'er an infant yearn,
This confidence is of our love the ground.

Who trust the most, the most beloved prove !
A gracious law for baby innocence ;
And we should perish did we lack the love
Of those who are our earliest defence.

Once when the broken clouds had drenched the ground,
A friendly arm about my waist was laid,
And bore me o'er. Yet my misgiving found
A pang in every step my bearer made.

Not so the infant ; safe asleep she lies,
In rocking arms, or still upon my knee ;
No nervous clutchings, no foreboding cries
Recall me from my sober reverie.

This precious atom of a mighty plan
Must one day meet and conquer perils dread ;
Yet, as it opened with the love of man,
Its end shall be in love's great fountain head.

THE HUMAN VOICE.

If I should wander where the hill-born stream
Glides on beneath the shady mountain ash,
Where verdure is around, and light above,
And naught is sounding but the water's splash.

If I should feel upon my lonely mind
The shadow of the mountain's silent powers,
Then would my pure delight be perfected
With garlands of sweet music's living flowers.

I would not choose the horn or cornet's song,
For these are blatant with the hot desire
For strong excitement and the battle's din,
And call the listener to an answering fire.

The infant wail of oboe comes not here ;
This speaks of life when knowledge is a dream,
When love is of the instinct, not the soul,
And all reality a play doth seem.

The 'cello's mocking sneer would ill befit
Where God in His great earnestness abides ;
The violin sly has e'er a tale to tell
Of some malicious sense that in us hides.

The organ's varied harmony would fail
To give expression to the tender part,
And is it not the noblest aim of song,
The perfect end of music's melting art ?

The mirthless laugh of flute is not for now,
Its monologous tone is wearying,
And like a poor, unsettled, human mind,
To earless space its sadness murmuring.

The human voice that from a full heart flows
Is that alone which to my spirit brings
That true delight, without a doubtful taint,
Left by the passing of its dainty wings.

E'en if the voice refuse to link itself
With poesy, and wordless be the lay,
Yet would it bring me near to Heaven's gate,
The bright fulfilment of the earthly day.

THE FORGET-ME-NOT.

WHEN evening puts her hand in that of day,
And night is slowly drawn across the sky,
When mildly breathe the zephyrs from the bay,
To rustle in the grass with hopeful sigh,
Then dream I of that garden home of old,
Where all were sinless, holy, undefiled ;
And to my thoughts there comes in letters bold
A story that was told me when a child.

'Twas in sweet Eden, home of all things blest,
Where ceaseless was the blooming of the flowers,
Where labour, rightly intermixed with rest,
And purest pastimes filled the leisure hours.
Adam to every thing had given a name,
With some significance of race or kind,
The morning glory with its wing aflame,
The weeping willow with its bough inclined.

When Eden's birds were singing their good-night,
And gladly chirruping each to his mate,
Amid the avenues of blossom bright
The Father of creation walked in state.
God, as ourselves, the beautiful admires,
And deigns His own created joys to know.
He gazed upon the lily's golden fires,
And on the soft-eyed pansy, nestled low.

When passing on, He spied in border fair
A tiny flower of the softest blue ;
Each slender stalk did many blossoms bear,
With eyes upturned to catch the evening dew.
“ What is thy name, blue innocence ? ” He said.
“ Smallest of all My children blooming here ; ”
Then droopéd was each little sapphir’d head,
And trembled every burdened stalk with fear.

“ O Lord, my Father, pardon, I implore,
The name that Adam gave me I forget,
I thought but of my beauty, nothing more ;
But vanity is vanquished by regret.”
Then gently said the Father of us all—
“ Fear not, O, little, fragile, thoughtless thing,
I purpose thee another name to call,
In which shall only pleasant memories ring.

“ Though thou forgettest all things in an hour,
Forget Me not though thou should’st live for
aye ;
Forget-me-not shall be thy name, O, flower,
Bright child of morning, daughter of the day.”

THE BALLAD OF THE KURWIE.

[NOTE.—Kurwie is the aboriginal for emu; Courtenie signifies the native companion; Koeworie is the laughing-jackass, and the following story was prevalent among the blacks of the Murray tribe.—See "The Aborigines of Victoria," by P. Beverage.]

PART I.

LONG ages since, before the sun
 Beamed brightly in the sky,
Before the sparkling evening star
 Unveiled her brilliant eye ;
Before the bush and hill and plain
 Were trod by foot of man,
The feud to be recorded here
 Among the birds began.

The Kurwie's happy days were spent
 In soaring to and fro
Above the cloud-enveloped earth
 That blackly loomed below ;
She never left her airy home
 To light upon the ground,
For in the atmosphere her food
 And drink and rest were found.

But soon, alas ! like many more,
 Her glance was downward bent,
And with her nobler destiny
 She made her discontent.

Down in the moisty marshes, where
The sedge and rush abound,
She saw a flock of Courtenies,
Who danced in merry round.

And, oh ! she heard their singing sweet,
Sweeter than any bird,
It held her wings in rapture poised—
She envied while she heard.
So, slowly downward, steadily,
She drooped, and lighted soon
Close to the dancing Courtenies,
Beside a broad lagoon.

In terror every Courtenie
Hid in the reedy bed,
The sight of such a mighty bird
Had filled them all with dread.
Then, in a whisper to the rest,
One sly old dame did say—
“ I'll speak to her ; she looks more fool
Than savage bird of prey.”

Then out she waded fearlessly,
And made a greeting fair :
“ O, lovely creature ! what could bring
Such marvel from the air ?”

The Kurwie chuckled knowingly,
For she was very vain,
"Dear madam," she replied, "I come
To beg you dance again.

"While soaring in my lofty home
I saw and heard your game,
And hoped, perchance, you'd teach it me,
If from the sky I came."

Straightway the wicked Courtenie
Began to plan a fraud,
She looked upon the noble bird,
And on her pinions broad ;
And while the Kurwie looked about,
She signalled to the rest
To hide their wings upon their backs,
And join her in the jest.

Then to the Kurwie she began—
"Dear madam, I should be
Delighted to impart the art
You so admire in me;
But if you learn, you must submit
To have your wings cut short ;
The price were far too high to pay
For all our foolish sport."

The Kurwie quick her protest made—
“No, not at all, my friend,
I’d sacrifice a thousand wings
So that I gained my end ;
I see you have no wings at all,
And you sing loud and true,
So come, good dame, trim up my plumes,
That I may sing like you.”

With wicked glee the Courtenie
Poor Kurwie’s wings despoiled,
And all the while with flattering words
The Kurwie’s ear was oiled ;
Next in the air the Kurwie heard
A flapping, whirring sound,
The Courtenies had flown away,
And left her on the ground.

“This seems like treachery,” she thought,
“But now I’ll try my skill,”
And thereupon began to trip
It lightly with a will ;
But such an ugly, waddling gait
Poor Kurwie did attain,
That Koeworie, near at hand,
Laughed loud, and laughed again.

In passing, let me tell you all
That ever since that day
The Koeworie's sulky mood
Has vanished quite away ;
And when he feels his spirits high,
And needs must give them vent,
An hour upon a lofty bough
In tuneful mirth is spent.

The Kurwie stopped ; she could not bear
The Koeworie's scorn,
And slowly on her simple mind
The truth began to dawn ;
She had been cheated ; yet, she thought,
“ Perchance I still may sing.”

And opening her spacious mouth,
She made the gum-trees ring ;
But such a coarse, discordant note
The world had never heard,
It frightened Koeworie off,
And many another bird.

The Kurwie could not wade and catch
The frogs that croaked below,
So in disgust she stalked away,
And o'er the plain did go ;

And now and then she stopped to pick
The cool and tempting weeds,
And voted them superior to
The frogs among the reeds.

When wearied with her journeying,
She made herself content
Beneath a scented myall bush ;
And so her life is spent.

PART II.

Once on a time Dame Courtenie
Resolved to go abroad,
That all her chicks might sport themselves
Upon the fragrant sward ;
With all a mother's pride she watched
Them running here and there,
It was a sight to glad her heart,
And pay for all her care.

But far away across the plain
Another mother came,
“ Ha ! ha ! here is my simple friend,
The Kurwie,” quoth the dame ;
“ Now, chickies, run away and hide,
Excepting you, my dear ;
You stop and play about awhile ;
There's nothing, love, to fear.”

The Kurwie, too, had brought her brood,
That they might learn to choose
What food is good for Kurwielets,
And what is little use ;
And nearer to the Courtenie
She strayed about the down,
Nor deigned to show her ancient spite
In word or look or frown.

"Good-morning," said the Courtenie.
"How pleased am I to see
That you have quite accustomed grown
To live on earth like me ;
I hope your health is of the best,
And that your spirits rise
Above the failings pitiful
That vex a mother's eyes."

"O, thank you, madam," Kurwie said,
"'Tis not ill-health that frets,
But I am worried out of life
With all these Kurwielets."
"Why keep so many, then, my friend ?
Why don't you do like me ?
If I had tried to rear my brood,
It's in my grave I'd be.

"As soon as all my eggs are hatched,
I peck away the brains
Of these unwelcome little pests,
Till only one remains.
One chicken needs but little care,
And, dear, if I were you,
I'd just dispose of that great brood,
And save but one or two."

The Kurwie said—"A splendid plan,
I'll try it straight away ;"
And then the heartless simpleton
Her little ones did slay.
But, O ! what anguish she endured
When she beheld them slain !
She struck the ground with angry feet,
And shrieked and shrieked again.

The Courtenie and all her brood
Had made a swift retreat,
Amused at Kurwie's boundless rage,
And at the clever cheat.
But retribution followed hard
Upon the wicked dame,
And she was punished for her crimes
With everlasting shame.

O, tell me, do you ever hear
 Her once so lovely song !
O, tell me of her graceful neck,
 That once was straight and long !
The voice that drew the Kurwie down
 From wide Tyrilian* span,
Has never since that day been heard
 By bird or beast or man.

Only the note by which she calls
 Her young ones to her side,
Is left of those dear ravishments
 That were her old-time pride.
Her neck, that was so beautiful,
 Has now a crookéd turn,
That all who see her thus deformed
 Her evil ways may spurn.

But still the Courtenie was hard,
 And when temptation fell,
She cheated Kurwie once again,
 As I shall shortly tell.

* The aborigine word "Tyrili" meant "the blue," or the wide-spreading sky. (Compare Lake Tyrell.)

PART III.

The Kurwie sat upon her eggs,
With hopeful industry,
Amid a boss of shady scrub
That fanned her passively ;
The memory of her brood deceased
No longer gave her pain,
For soon a dozen Kurwielets
Would sport upon the plain.

But Courtenie must needs pass by,
And, still unsatisfied
With all the mischief she had wrought,
Once more her cunning tried.
“Good-morning,” said she civilly,
“I hope you’re very well ;
How pleasant are the grassy downs,
How sweet the bushes smell ;
If you could leave those precious eggs
At gentle Nature’s call,
A stroll across the plains would cheer,
Nor harm the eggs at all.”

“Be off, you hag !” the Kurwie cried.
“Think you that I forget
The trick so villainous you played
On me when last we met ?

Be off, or you will rue it sore !
I'll not again be fooled ;
I'll beat your wicked head to pulp
Before my wrath has cooled."

"Come on," the Courtenie replied.
"Come on ; we'll fight it out,
And, being such a clever bird,
You'll win, I little doubt."
The Kurwie made a frantic rush
Straight at the cunning dame,
But, lo ! she rose on spreading wing,
So Kurwie missed her aim.

Had Courtenie received the blow,
Her life had ended there,
But she was safely out of reach,
And hovering in the air.
And oft she'd light upon the ground
Before her angry foe,
Then, swiftly rising, ridicule
Poor Kurwie down below.

At last she wearied of the sport,
And steadied for descent
Upon the unprotected eggs,
On wicked mischief bent ;

And as her simple victim to
Her challenge did respond,
She vaulted lightly o'er her back,
And to the nest beyond.

When Kurwie turned again to charge,
It chilled her blood to see
The Courtenie upon her eggs,
Stamping with vicious glee.
Each blow crushed in a glossy shell,
And marred its deep, rich green ;
Was ever such distressing sight
By Kurwie mother seen !

One perfect egg alone remained,
And that was tossed on high
With such malignant vehemence,
It fled into the sky.

And then—O, wondrous to relate !
There shot a sudden glow
Of radiant brightness unexcelled,
That lit the world below.
It glinted golden on the trees,
And burnished up the green,
And every creek and wide lagoon
Was turned to steely sheen.

"Tis said the egg that skyward went
 Broke on a heap of wood
Piled up on high by Nyoudenout,
 Who is the spirit good.

And Nyoudenout was pleased, and said—
 " How cheerful are these rays !
Each night I'll pile the wood afresh,
 And burn it in the days."
The fighting birds their combat ceased,
 So dazzled were their eyes,
And Courtenie has never lied
 Since Nowie* lit the skies.

* "Nowie" means the sun.

GARDEN MESSENGERS.

A BASKET filled with dainty blooms
Was sent a gift to me ;
Ah ! friend, I knew the pretty things
Could come from none but thee.

And so I sat me down to hear
The message that they brought ;
Who listens to the lisping flowers
Gains many a lovely thought.

The red carnations first began,
In chorus soft and true ;
Your friend requests that we should bring
Her fondest love to you.

She would herself embrace you, dear,
But that's a future pleasure ;
So we, her gifts, are sent to make
Atonement in small measure.

And next I heard the baby chime
Of Canterbury bells ;
A merry message we ring out,
A thousand happy spells.

We are the home of dancing fays,
Who never tire of fun ;
So, like the fairies, joyous be—
Nay, if you will, be one.

The noisy little bells had hushed
The lily of the vale ;
But now it shook its scented cups,
And lisped to me this tale.

Neither of us is beautiful,
Yet not for nought we live ;
I to the world my perfume yield,
You, deeds of love can give.

She says the noblest works on earth
May never come to light,
And bids me soothe the secret pang
Of disappointment's blight.

And last I heard the maiden-hair,
That decked the basket round ;
It sang to me a wordless song
With meaning so profound,

That I could only hear, and smile ;
For deep within the heart
Lies unexpressed, 'twixt friend and friend,
Their friendship's holiest part.

Dearest, your pretty messengers
Have told me what you would,
And what remains by them unsaid,
By me is understood.

Your greeting stole the fragrant sweets
Of those who brought it me ;
So when you send your love again,
Let such the bearers be.

LABURNUM CHAINS.

I KNOW two willow-shaded streams,
Where plumy rushes grow ;
They meet close by a little town,
And then together flow.

And in the fertile angle formed,
A thriving orchard stands,
Extending from the reedy bank
Up to the hilly lands.

'Twas there, one sunny afternoon,
Two happy souls were straying ;
His earnest tones, her blushing cheek
Their converse theme betraying.

I came upon them in a walk
With apple blossoms lined ;
And then, unnoticed, with a smile,
I wisely fell behind.

I would have followed, but I knew
He spoke to her alone,
For to my ear the zephyr brought
His soft, yet manly tone.

I let them go, and went my way,
With slow and aimless feet,
And just at sunset found myself
Where the two streamlets meet.

In half-unconsciousness I heard
The dabbling water flow ;
The willows dipped their finger tips
And waved them to and fro.

Half glad, half sad, I turned about,
The orchard paths to gain,
And spied the lover and the maid
Beneath the golden chain.

His face was radiant with joy ;
Her hand was in his own ;
And now he spoke for all the world,
And not for her alone.

A beautiful laburnum chain,
Plucked from the tree above,
He wound about her slender wrist
In token of his love.

“ Absent are other bonds than these,
O, maiden of my heart !
But these shall serve as well as gold
My meaning to impart.

“I pledge myself forever thine,
And bind you, love, to me,
And God shall be my witness, dear,
And judge 'twixt me and thee.

“Each golden blossom on this chain
Shall be a happy year
Of mutual love and confidence,
Each other's life to cheer.

“And if the future day shall bring
Both joy and sorrow blent,
Then, hand in hand we'll bear it, love,
And show ourselves content.”

His arm had stolen round her waist,
To hold her at his side ;
He gazed with long, admiring look
Of reverence and pride.

A happy year went quickly down,
And Spring was almost dead,
When we were summoned to the church
To see that couple wed.

Each tending maiden's fingers clasped
A virgin-hued bouquet ;
But what was in the bride's dear hand
Upon her wedding day ?

A glistening, showery bunch of gold
From those laburnum boughs
Where they had stood a year before,
And pledged their plighting vows.

When Springtime brings the golden chain,
I feel that every spray
Should be a pledge, and every sun
Should rise a wedding-day.

BIRDS OF THE CITY.

I pine for country and its joys,
 Of pastures wide and shady trees,
With Nature's garden at my feet,
 And Nature's perfumes on the breeze.

I long to walk beside the creek,
 To listen to the gleeful birds,
Who merrymake among the boughs
 With chatterings that have no words.

Body and mind are wearied sore
 With hum and patter, patter and hum,
Of travelling feet and rolling cars
 That through the city go and come.

No birds, no flowers, no odours sweet,
 No cheerful stretch of fresh, green grass ;
Only the houses' sulky shade,
 And crowds of men that jostling pass.

In such a mood I stood to wait
 The coming of my homeward train,
Amid the station's rush and haste,
 In weariness akin to pain.

Then, from the wide verandah's roof
There came a sweet surprise for me ;
I heard a mynah's shrilling note
Above the tumult's hissing sea.

He pertly whistled out his call,
And chirped with all his knowing skill,
With such irresistible humour blent,
It made me laugh against my will.

And 'twixt the rails the sparrows culled
The crumbs by childish fingers cast ;
Rising at each approaching step,
To light again when it had passed.

O, how they twittered as each strove
(Wee, greedy things) to fare the best ;
They made me think of fighting boys,
Who struggle for the struggle's zest.

And then the engine's crashing tread
Sent them to seek a safer place ;
But I had felt their mute reproach,
And won an hour's contented grace.

So I have made these simple lines
In honour of the feathered throats,
Which, even in the city's din,
Are glad to cheer us with their notes.

WINTER FLOWERS.

OUR fathers tell us, Southern born,
In ardent, tender words,
How England's Spring is ushered in
By flowers and singing birds.

They say they love the snowdrop white,
The jealous daffodils,
The crisp and scented hyacinths,
That shelter by the rills.

The violet, nestled 'neath the hedge,
Among its heart-shaped leaves,
And breathing gifts of fragrance forth,
Its share of love receives.

These are the suite of princely Spring,
And every British heart
Rejoices at his reign begun,
When Winter snows depart.

But 'neath our dear Australian skies
This dainty flower band
Has taken on itself a task
To suit our warmer strand.

When Autumn winds have brought the frost,
And June rains sting the cheek,
And every other flower is shy,
Then comes the violet meek.

And ere it hides its purple head,
The snowdrop comes in sight,
And after them the hyacinth
In pink and blue and white.

When sleep our other garden friends,
Recruiting for the Spring,
These children of the English mead
Burst into blossoming.

The friend that smiles when others frown
Must ever be most dear ;
So we Australians love the throng
That brings us Winter cheer.

Brought from their native home, they thrive
Beneath our brilliant sun ;
And we have gained a mighty good,
While England loses none.

MERCY.

WHERE spreading orchards plant their feet
Among the native woods of gum,
And where the breezy health invites
The city-wearied folk to come ;
I sought the upland's rural peace,
But there the clouds had spent their strength,
And shallow pools of liquid mud
Lay on the highway's winding length.
I little cared, for Jolly's feet,
And not my own, the way must tread ;
And while the wheels cast muddy spray,
Uphill and down we swiftly sped.
But presently the pony's pace
Grew slower, and with limping stride
He drew us o'er the level road,
And up the ridge's sloping side.
His shoe had slipped a nail, and turned,
Until the iron point before
Pressed upward in the tender foot,
And left it wounded deep and sore.
I pitied Jolly in my heart,
And wished my journey at an end,
But he who held the guiding reins
Was more in practice Jolly's friend.

He put the reins within my hand,
And 'lighting on the muddy road,
He splashed along at Jolly's side,
Naught heeding save the lessened load.
Of him who drove I little knew,
A stranger met but for the day,
Perchance to never meet again
Upon the length of life's highway.
Yet, if we ne'er touch hands again,
Within my heart shall always rise
A kindly thought for him who made
This small, unhonoured sacrifice.

A THIEF REPROVED.

I STOLE a rosebud o'er the fence
Without my neighbour's leave,
And round its petals smooth began
A story sweet to weave.

What maiden would not prize that bloom
To decorate her hair ?
And many a youth would send it forth
His passion to declare.

And then, in absent-mindedness,
I dropped the pretty bud
Upon the rain-besoddened ground,
And in a pool of mud.

Its petals, shaken from their bed,
Lay scattered at my feet,
As at its heart I saw a worm
Had found a snug retreat.

“ You thief !” I cried, then paused and smiled,
For I was thieving, too ;
This creature stole the bloom from me,
I stole it, friend, from you.

OMNIPRESENCE.

ALONG the cliff I wandered,
And heard the ocean's power ;
Upon the rocks below me
The rolling waves did tower ;
One said—"The sea is awful ;
I bow myself in fear!"
But I was deeply feeling
The mighty God is here.

A lily's spotless goblet
Before me smiling grew,
Upon its white lip sparkled
The crystal morning dew.
One said—"How fair a cradle
Receiveth Nature's tear!"
But I was saying softly—
"The tender God is here."

The midnight came in silence,
Amid a hushful wait,
We waited for the old year
To give the new her state ;
I thought of life that passes,
As comes and goes the year,
And in my heart was whispered—
"The eternal God is here!"

In all things that befall thee,
In happiness and joy,
In sorrows and in labour
That must thy days employ ;
In fame and tribulation,
In hope and doubt and fear,
If thou hast mind to see it,
The Father God is here.

THE RHYTHMIC MEASURE.

WARRNAMBOOL, AUGUST, 1901.

(*To my Sister, who died 1st August, 1900.*)

THE rhythmic measure of the sea
Is silent on the shore ;
I listen for the melody
That pleased in days of yore ;
But he who plays upon the waves,
And sounds their mighty strings,
Is resting in the ocean caves,
With drenched and drooping wings.

The voice of our beloved one
Is silent now in sleep ;
We long and listen for a tone,
And, hearing none, we weep ;
The eyes that oft in pity filled,
We crave to meet again,
The hands that toiled for others, stilled—
And all our longings vain.

Yet with the passing days will come
The waking of the sea,
The wind will sally from his home
To make new melody ;

And she, our own beloved, too,
Will come again at last,
Her spirit clad in body new,
On glory's fashion cast.

THE SOURCE OF VERSE.

I SEARCHED the realm of thought and Nature, too,
For something fit whereon to rest a rhyme,
I would have something beauteous and sublime,
Yet something that is fraught with interest new.
And straightway I began the woods to view,
In North and South, in East and Western clime ;
I scanned philosophies of olden time,
The flowers and birds, the earth and heavens blue ;
And much of pleasure I discovered there,
Of surface beauty and of graceful parts,
But in them all there lacked the spirit's force.
Then cried the poets, " Thou must seek elsewhere
If thou wouldest learn the secret of our arts ;
In human life is poetry's true source."

TO SLEEP.

O, PEACEFUL seraph, soft embalmer, Sleep !
Quench in my body all its active fire,
And make me for a season to expire,
While floats my soul above the eternal deep.
But when the morn gay holiday doth keep,
Before his dancing feet thou must retire,
When comes the resurrection of desire,
And sense and will across the darkness sweep.
Yet by thy coming, daily death, we know.
How great our need of Heaven's fatherhood,
For feebler than are babes, by thee laid low,
We come in safety to the border world,
Where we are fitted more to meet the glow
Of life's fierce evil, and to taste its good.

A PASSING THOUGHT.

THE heaving deck rocks gently 'neath our feet,
The lapping wavelets wash the sturdy pier ;
The moment of departure draweth near,
And friends on shore their dear farewells repeat.
These o'er, we sit amid a silence sweet,
Half-minded now to drop a parting tear,
But hope before us, and behind good cheer,
Bid sorrow from our eyes and hearts retreat.
Then, turning once again to cry " Farewell !"
We find the ship is gliding from the land,
Nor had we noted when the moorings fell.
I thought, " O God ! when I must leave the earth,
Thus calmly, silently my breath dispel,
And let me wake in Heaven and in Thy hand !"

HYMN OF THE PRIESTS OF VARUNA
WHEN PRESENTING A YOUNG MAN
AS SACRIFICE.

O, GREAT Varuna,
We come before thy seat,
We bring an offering meet,
Which shall our fervent piety display,
And turn thine anger from us, God of Day !

This worthy victim
Our intercession makes,
Our stiff defiance breaks ;
We know that thou art mightier than all ;
In fear and faith we in thy presence fall.

Thy parts are many ;
Thou spreadest out the skies ;
The mountains that arise
Are but the thrones whereon thou sitt'st above,
Thy will among humanity to move.

Thy mighty finger
The valleys down have pressed ;
And where thy feet did rest
The lakes spread out their gleaming silver shine,
Where purple shadows from the hills recline.

Thy skill unbounded
Has measured out the years,
And set the floating spheres,
That they might count the seasons in their round,
And in man's timeless life a measure found.

Thou great controller,
The heavens own thy rule ;
Through their translucent pool
Thou drivest forth the clouds, thy herd of kine,
To drop their milk for man—the rain benign.

The earth beholding,
Thou smilest at the ways
Of man, his scanty days,
And turnest unto naught his purpose strong,
Drawing his unresisting will along.

We fear thy fetters,
The darkness of the night,
The fading of our sight ;
The awful sick-bed pain and agony,
We fear them—let not these our portion be.

We praise Varuna ;
We supplicate thine ear ;
With offerings draw near
To hide our guiltiness and make our peace ;
Then, O, Varuna ! let thine anger cease.

Thy glorious brother
Looks down with golden eye
From out the noonday sky,
And is propitious to our sacrifice,
To him and thee be praises thrice and thrice.

With deep contrition
We come to seal our peace,
To beg for our release
From gloomy fears and agonies of mind,
And from the pains thy justice hath assigned.

Varuna-Mitra,
O, holy brothers, hear !
Disperse our doubting drear,
O, be not scornful of the life we bring,
For great is he whose praises now we sing.

HYMN TO AGNI (FIRE).

NOTE.—In the ancient religion of India many gods were worshipped. Varuna was the greatest, and ruler of all; Agni was fire, and afterwards the god of fire; and Yama was the ruler of the dead.

HYMN.

I SING a hymn to Agni,
The messenger of Heaven,
Creator of all glory,
The gracious father of the human race.

The clouds that glide above us
In the celestial ocean,
Have nursed his infant being,
Until with radiant gleam he rent their sides.

And as he darts, the thunder
Speaks forth in awesome voices,
The power of the lightning,
The path of Agni that is visible.

He dwelleth in the daylight ;
The chariot of Varuna
Goes forth to rule the work-time,
Aglow with brightness born of Agni's touch.

He droppeth from the ocean
Of blue celestial vapour,
And hideth in the herbage,
Where none his secret presence can espy.

But oft in might he rises
To hurry through the forest,
To blow the breath that slayeth,
And turns the verdure into blighted ruin.

When he goes forth to journey,
He roareth like the monsoon,
He trampeth like the war-horse,
With hissing fierce, and crash, and horrid din.

He licks the leafy branches,
And leaves them black and naked ;
He winds his arms around them,
And snaps them as a child would break a reed.

He climbs from trunk to tree-top,
And waves his crest above him,
His many colours gleaming,
Till every glade is bright with fountain fires.

He veils his front with smoke-mist,
And through the forest races ;
The frightened birds are fleeing,
Or, fainting, drop to feed his mightiness.

The wingless throng he chases,
As victors chase the vanquished ;
And, laughing at their panic,
He slays the fallen with a greedy hand.

Yet he who hath the power
Has deigned to be our servant,
And in our bodies dwelling,
He lights the flame of mortal life within.

His daily birth is holy,
Yet is he ever willing
Upon our hearths to sparkle,
And serve the needs of frail humanity.

The sacrifice he melteth,
And bears it up to Heaven,
While sacred words are flowing
In prayer for gifts, or thanks for blessings sent.

And when our lives are ended,
And Yama calls the spirit,
It goes on Agni's bosom,
To rest with those whom death had claimed before.

I sing a hymn to Agni,
The mightiest and wisest ;
Here will I give him praises
For all his untold benefits to man.

ON THE PLAINS.

SUMMER.

THE Summer is blowing across the plain,
Its withering breath from the north is here,
And tintings of brown on the fading grass
Are sorrowful signs of the sleep-time near.

For soon will the paddocks be bleached and pale,
And every blade of the green have fled ;
And Nature will sleep through the long, hot days,
And rest on earth's bosom her languid head.

O, weary the time when the sultry days
Are filled with the sounds that may not be heard—
With sounds that are numberless, faint and strange,
As letters that fade on a parchment blurred.

The crow in the distance his dismal note
Is uttering clear to the cloudless sky,
Where colourless, shimmering, Summer light,
Is the setting that frameth the sun's fierce eye.

How weird, when the chimneys are roaring loud
At strokes from the wind that is hot as fire ;
And high o'er the tumult of restless sound
There rises the hum of the fence of wire.

The grasses then snap from their anchored roots,
And rustle away on the scorching gust ;
And far as the quivering eye can see
Are billows on billows of blinding dust.

And when the calm evening has come at last,
With sunset of blood in a smoky sky,
And when the deep solitude rests on all,
What wonder if then we should heave a sigh.

Like one who was dreaming a pleasant dream
Of mountains and rivers and dropping rain,
Until the warm breath of the starlit night
Recalls us to life on the sleeping plain.

AUTUMN.

Why cometh my lady of Autumn thus,
As regal as queen in her car of state ?
Through long days of March we awaited her,
But April has brought her, though she is late.

Her heralds are raging above our heads,
O, list to their voices, the thunders loud !
Their brows are adorned with the lightning's gleam,
Their horses the billows of racing cloud.

Autumn, my lady, hath gentle mien,
And brings in her *cortège* the warm, moist days,
That call out the birds and the insects, too,
To chatter and dance in the sun's mild rays.

She bringeth no flowers to deck her robe,
Her beautiful garment of short, green grass ;
But odours are wafted from tender blades,
That scatter their verdure where she did pass.

And, O, for the joy of the mushroom time,
When freshness is filling the misty air,
When children in parties the paddocks o'er
Are searching with glee for the dainties rare.

The smell of the mushroom is earthy sweet,
And calls us away to the paddocks wide ;
Yes, April has gifts that are all her own,
And childhood is merry at Autumn tide.

At even the crickets are singing now,
And frogs in a chorus their pleasure tell,
From beds of the desolate "lignum" creeks,
Beginning to yield to the season's spell.

But swiftly the lady of Autumn flies,
And swiftly doth follow her gentle train ;
And ere we have bidden our last farewell,
The Winter has settled upon the plain.

WINTER.

And now is the time when the misty air
Is lingering over the treeless down ;
Now lashing with fingers of ice the cheek
That hath not forgotten its Summer brown.

The grass that the Autumn so gently coaxed
From embryo secret and dormant root,
Is carpet to cover the soft, brown mud
That yields to the pressure of passing foot.

How cold are the days when the sun is hid
By clouds that are gorged with the freezing
showers !
Ah, then do we long for the sweet, mild days
That shone in their glory in April hours !

The dams and the channels and creeks are full,
So full that it seems but a tale to say
That Summer will drain them of all their store,
And leave their beds lined with the baking clay.

The fathers rejoice at the plenteous rain,
And think of the bountiful crops in store ;
But we who are younger and not so wise.
Are wishing the rain and the frost were o'er.

When milking is ended, and supper done,
O, then is the pleasure of Winter time ;
We read and we work at the glowing fire,
And laugh at the winds or the silent rime.

But Winter, like men that are old and grey,
Is clamouring loud for a word of praise ;
“ My friend has forgotten that, after frost,
I bring the most glorious sunny days.”

Yes, days that are worthy of romping Spring
Oft struggle in Winter a place to gain ;
But dignified age hath the sovereign sway
Ere sunny September has reached the plain.

SPRING.

Some morning we traverse the way to school,
That leads o'er the paddocks all bright with dew,
And answering gladness in each responds
To glittering sun in the sky's soft blue.

But what is that tiniest dot of gold,
That quivers and dances upon the air ?
It is the forerunner of thousands more
Of bright dandelions, the Spring's first fair.

And, speedily following, comes the host
Of sweet-smelling peas in their varied dress,
With petals of purple and red and blue,
To garnish the green of the wilderness.

There are butterflies darting from bloom to bloom,
The quaintest of lovers for every flower ;
And under the shade of a tuft of grass
The field-mouse has made her a secret bower.

And when the late days of October come,
Once more are the paddocks in gold arrayed ;
And sweet is the breath of the fragrance blown
From hearts of the daisies that never fade.

The Spring is a frolicsome, lovely child,
The rays of the sun are her gleaming hair,
Her feet are the flowers that dance and smile,
Her voice is the odours the breezes bear.

If showers, perchance, in the vernal days,
Should scatter their tears on her sweet, young
face,
The sorrows of childhood are briefly wept,
And, vanishing silently, leave no trace.

Then let us be merry while Spring is here,
To make the old young, and the young ones gay ;
For Summer, the witherer, draweth near,
To cover the land with its shroud of grey.

THE STRAIGHTER THE RIVER, THE SWIFTER THE TIDE.

THE sluggish Meander crept by at my feet,
The birds overhead twitter'd lovingly sweet,
The creamy clematis climbed over the bushes,
And sent on the wind-wave its perfume in gushes ;
With music, sweet odours and beauty I dwelt,
And yet a soft strain of solemnity felt ;
I heard the stream singing, as onward it sighed,
“The straighter the river, the swifter the tide.”

The cattle came awkwardly down for a drink,
And stood, as if musing, upon the stream's brink ;
Then, leisurely turning, ascended to feed
Where, 'mid the coarse sedge, grows the daintier
weed.

I heard the dry twigs by their thudding hoofs
snapped,
Though still in a reverie my senses were rapt ;
And still the stream whispered, as onward it hied,
“The straighter the river, the swifter the tide.”

On the opposite bank a lad whistled a song,
And with him a greyhound went leaping along ;
The dog sighted game, and went off with a bound—
The song ceased—the whistler followed the hound,

And I was alone with Meander again.
I listened to hear it repeat the refrain ;
It sang through the rushes that grew at its side,
“ The straighter the river, the swifter the tide.”

“ And what of the river of life ?” I inquired,
“ Of those by a generous energy fired,
Who work with directness and resolute mind,
Shall they through their labours a speedy end find ?
I know that the faster the current may sweep,
The sooner ’tis hid in the breast of the deep !”
And once more the stream in a whisper replied,
“ The straighter the river, the swifter the tide.”

And so I said slowly—“ ’Twere better to die
Than drowsily creep while the precious days fly ;
The swift river cleanses wherever it goes,
The laggard deposits foul silt as it flows.
I choose that my life-stream be swift from its source,
E’en though it be short through the might of its
force.”
And if I at last in God’s mightiness hide,
O, straight be the river, and swift be the tide.

THE MOUNTAIN CREEK.

Down from a spring in the Plenty Hills
I tumble and stumble and slide ;
With many a madcap leap I rush
O'er the mountain's fertile side.

With here a fall of a dozen feet,
And there a long, still pool,
Where e'en in the Summer's parching heat
The water is clear and cool.

I make a rush at each obstacle,
And master it with a bound ;
And those which I find too high to leap,
I merrily sing around.

I dabble among the twisted roots
Of an overshadowing tree,
Then, darting away, a band of leaves
I carry along with me.

And now I come to the level ground,
Where the sheep and the cattle feed ;
Though my song is less noisy than up the hill,
I hold to my former speed.

With many a double upon myself,
I seek for the easiest way
To take me over the stony ground,
And into the River Yea.

And once in my journey I skirt a home
Where some busy people dwell,
Where many a frisk' on my green bank proves
That the children love me well.

The nervous ewe and the mild-eyed cow
Come down to my side to drink,
And the silky-furred hare and rabbit sit
Poised daintily on my brink.

In many a spot beneath my bank
Grows the finest maiden-hair,
Where the snake may find, on a burning day,
A hiding-place cool and fair.

Wherever I go I take with me
Release from the Summer drouth ;
Restoring with but my finger tips
To the grey, bald earth its youth.

When the drenching rains of the Winter come,
I swell to a surging tide,
And rise to the top of my grass-grown bank,
To peep o'er the paddocks wide.

But, flooding time over, I sink again
To my narrow, gravelly bed,
And I leave the field to the bird and beast,
While I watch the sky instead.

So, ever contented I sing along,
And am never, never sad,
For sorrow is only found in men,
But Nature is ever glad.

OUR GREETING TO ENGLAND AT SUNSET.

TRAVEL, thou golden one, into the West,
Sink where the light clouds are gilded and
pearled ;
Say to the men of old England's best,
Brothers are here in the South of the world.

Carry our messages over the deep,
Bear on your rays a bright smile from our mouth ;
Drop it on Englishmen waking from sleep,
'Tis from their brothers who live in the South.

Maids of Australia have kisses to send
Up to the maids of the rose-and-white cheek ;
Some have love wishes to give to a friend,
Here and there lovers a whisper to speak.

Most have some kin, either distant or near,
Dwelling where father or mother once dwelt ;
Many whose mem'ry is held very dear,
Others whose warm grasp our hands never felt.

Still they are kindred, though eyes never met,
And anticipation our love for them stores ;
And each of us hopes that the future may yet
Fulfil his ambition to see England's shores.

Each warm-hearted citizen here has a word
For warm-hearted citizens over the sea,
And longs that good fellowship's voice may be
heard
From here to old England, the land of the free.

These are our charges, O, vanishing day,
Quickest of messengers, carry them forth,
Nor part with them ere thou hast trodden thy way,
To shine on our brothers who live in the North.

BABY AND MY LITTLE GIRL.

At the home-coming hour, when the toil of the day
Is laid to its rest for the night,
'Tis then that I turn where my heart leads the way,
With feelings of gentle delight ;
'Mid hurrying crowds and the clatter of feet,
'Mid rumble and hissing and whirl,
I think of the two I am going to meet—
Baby and my little girl.

The baby is learning to give me a smile
As bright as the fair days in Spring,
And little girl pulls at my coat all the while,
To see what new treasure I bring.
But soon after tea-time the chatter will cease,
And sleep's snowy wings will unfurl,
And two rosy faces are pillow'd in peace—
Baby and my little girl.

How dear is the pleasure of seeing them learn
The use of their tongue and their feet ;
The touch of their hands seems to make my heart
yearn,
Their kisses are tender and sweet.

These children are wealthy in love, and their worth
Is the worth of a priceless pearl ;
A fountain of happiness, river of mirth,
Are—baby and my little girl.

JEALOUSY.

LORD, pardon the sin I have sinned to-night,
Against my own heart and the heart of a friend ;
I have given the field to a demon of blight,
And suffered my soul in its presence to bend.

She knows, and Thou knowest, I love her right well,
With truest affection my heart to her cleaves,
But tempests of jealousy I could not quell—
My fondness dispersed like the Autumn-shed
leaves.

I fancied his voice took a tenderer tone
When speaking to her than he offered to me ;
And lo ! I have set him upon my heart's throne,
The king of a kingdom he wills not to be.

My jealousy raged but a moment, then died,
But in it I learned that to hate is to kill ;
I'd cast myself out on a passionate tide
Of murderous feeling and bitter self-will.

'Twas strange that my wrath to the lady should lean,
Instead of the man who had wounded my heart ;
For his the offence, if offence there had been ;
But justice in jealousy findeth no part.

And now I am calm, and remember the pain,
I know that its bitterness darkened my face ;
For, turning away, for I dared not remain,
I strove in my anguish to hide my disgrace.

And if my beloved has chosen my friend,
What right have I even to envy the choice ?
To see them made happy should be my love's end,
But passion has ever a clamorous voice.

Yet silence it, Lord, for it counselleth ill,
Or let me not hear it for envy employed ;
And if I must love him, O, give me the will
To strangle the demon that fain had destroyed.

REST ON THY PILLOW.

REST on thy pillow, my baby dear,
 Rest while the gay birds are singing ;
Rest where the wattles are waving near,
 Odours of love to thee bringing.
List to the murmuring hush of the bay,
 Heed not the breakers that roar far away,
Beautiful sleep is thy portion to-day,
 So rest, little baby, in peace.

Rest on thy pillow, my baby dear,
 Rest while the lone moon is wooing ;
Rest though the voice of the ocean is drear,
 Thine is the harbour's low cooing ;
Soft as the down of clematis thy bed,
 Curtains like spray of the sea overhead,
Innocent still of all sorrow and dread,
 So rest, little baby, in peace.

RUSTICATION.

AWAY to the country let us haste,
 Away from the city's roar,
Where the wearying crash of the tram and train
 Can be heard by us no more.

And horses will bear us along the road,
 With many a lightsome spring ;
And we'll raise our voices in chorus glad
 To the sound of the hoofs' sharp ring.

And now we approach the great white gate
 That leads to the little farm ;
And nearly a dozen of yelping dogs
 Give the folk of the house the alarm.

And, O, what genial, welcoming words !
 They set one's heart all aglow ;
What shaking of hands, and clatter of tongues,
 As into the kitchen we go !

With appetites sharpened we sit to dine
 At the snowy table spread,
With potatoes fresh dug, and tender lamb,
 And delicious home-made bread.

And if at dinner the converse slacks,
And you chance to be a reader,
Before your eyes is the *Weekly Times*,
The Australasian, or Leader.

The walls are covered with sheets of these,
Instead of our papers smart ;
And the pictures and printing from ceiling to floor
Are the country folks' gallery of art.

You may read of the Chino-Japanese war,
Or the price of potatoes and game ;
While the portraits of members of Parliament
Make a group round the window frame.

Dessert is partaken beneath the boughs
Of an old and shady fig ;
And we pluck for ourselves the milky fruit,
So luscious and sweet and big.

'Tis Autumn-tide, and the flowers are gone,
But the smell of the "bush" is sweet,
And the odour of tender, springing grass,
That is crushed by our passing feet.

We have, as musicians, a thousand birds,
With as many different songs,
The magpie is gurgling, the mynah chirps,
And the parrots chatter in throngs.

The note of the wagtail, so soft and clear,
Is heard from a tree below ;
While the coarser notes of the harmony come
From the cockatoo, jackass, and crow.

In talking and idling the time goes on,
Till starlight chases the day ;
Then, with the accordion's nasal strains
We pass half the evening away.

Next day is a Sabbath, clear and calm,
But from other days differing none,
Where every morn is a Sabbath bright,
And every day God's own.

Across the paddocks each afternoon,
We scramble among the trees,
Or search for the mason spider's home,
Or the haunt of the small wild bees.

Or else to the Creek of the Many Springs,
With its cool, clear water flowing,
Where the banks are lined with the feathery bloom
Of the reeds by the water growing.

We reach to pull them, and tumble in,
But what matter a slip or two ;
We are out for a holiday time, we say,
And we mean to have it, too.

But, alas ! for our love of the country life,
If there comes but a day's heavy rain,
We fret at being detained indoors,
And long to be home again.

At the best, we are all of us fine-weather friends,
And were there no end to fair weather,
The home and the love of our everyday life
Would fade from our minds altogether.

IMPRESSIONS ON RETURNING TO TOWN AFTER A HOLIDAY.

THE deep-toned chaos in my ear
Reminds me of the city near,
Its throbs of thrilling sound
Are telling of an endless strife
For wealth, or fame, or even life,
Wherever men are found.

And I recall the hours I spent
In quietest retirement
Beside the Creek of Springs ;
Where silently the water flows,
And nothing breaks the soft repose
But hum of insect wings.

The march flies' lazy energy,
The rustling grass affected me
With but a pleasant thought
That things were living at my side,
And nothing yet had ever died
Which God's great hand had wrought.

And I was glad to be alone,
To feel that Nature was my own,
That lovely Autumn day ;

And in my stupid vanity
I thought that God was nearer me
When men were far away.

Then to the city home returned,
Once more my heart with ardour burned
To serve my brother's need,
To share with him the good I had,
To oust from both of us the bad,
And learn in full love's creed.

While in the country's loneliness,
I thought of Christly holiness
That here might be attained ;
With few temptations by the way,
And fewer men to lead astray,
And fewer sights that stained.

If self-perfection were the aim
Of all that God could from me claim,
Then had I argued true ;
But, open-eyed, I see at length
That something of my spirit's strength
Is to my fellows due.

'Twere well at times to go apart,
And rest the labour-hardened heart,
That love may enter in,

That God's own methods may repair,
With gentle sounds and fragrant air,
The stinging wounds of sin.

And when I touch the love that swells
In him who with his fellows dwells,
I feel it is of God,
And am content to live in peace
Where city turmoils never cease—
To tread where Jesus trod.

MORNING.

O, BEAUTIFUL morning, the youth of the daytime,
When sparkle the dewdrops on sweet-breathing
flowers,
When blithe are the birds in their matin-song
glories,
And mounteth the sun to his crystal blue towers !

How sweet is the air that is breathing around me,
Made pure by the vapours that fell in the dew ;
The roses have turned up their moist lips for kisses,
That each slanting ray may their blushes renew.

To evening is given the gentle and tender,
The sweetly sad moments when backward we
turn ;
To thee, O, fair morning, is given the joyful,
When bright aspirations and living hopes burn !

The noonday may bring with it toiling and hardship,
And weary complainings and longings for rest ;
But fresh from the angel of slumber we greet thee
With cheerful intention, and faith in the best.

In thee is an emblem of that resurrection
When all shall arise at the Father's great call,
When Heaven shall shine on our death and our
sorrow,
And cover our sin with its glorious pall.

O, brightness and purity, God of the morning,
O, breathe on my spirit the light of thy love,
That, just as the mortal delights in this beauty,
The being immortal may find joy above.

EVENING.

THE sun has gone, and evening dreams
Above the garden and the street ;
And softly, 'mid his fading gleams,
I heard the rain's uncovered feet.

They, too, are gone, and silence waits
To muffle each approaching sound,
And lay it down without the gates
Of charméd circle drawn around.

Through softest veil it reaches me
With all its harshness laid aside,
And touches only soothingly,
As if by darkness sanctified.

The evening's calm is over me,
A passionless devotion stirs ;
From thy great works, O Lord, to thee,
My soul its deepest love defers.

But still I cannot feel that thou
Would'st bid me pass unnoted these ;
They are the altar where I bow
To worship thee, the God of peace.

To-night the garden is a shrine,
 Built to thy loving qualities ;
 From lilac bough and rose-clad vine,
 The whispering air their incense frees.

Such perfect hours are rare in life,
 When God seems near, and all men good ;
 Whence silenced is our aching strife
 By twilight's healing solitude.

Why in our blindness do we turn
 To seek, in fierce excitement, calm ?
 And why are men so slow to learn
 That passion sings no soothing psalm ?

I would not give my present peace
 For song or dance, or gay attire ;
 My soul is small when such things please—
 I would to better things aspire.

In that ideal future home
 From whence I came and where I go,
 'Tis said that night will never come
 To cool our praise's fervid glow.

Perchance a gentle eventide
 Will follow on a day of praise,
 When active joy is laid aside
 For sweeter slumber's silent lays.

The awful blackness of the night
Can never touch that holy land ;
But evening's faint and veiled light
Is not a type of death's cold hand.

Our resting times are not to save
Our bodies only from decay ;
They make our minds and spirits brave
To meet the efforts of the day.

In Heaven the same selves live again,
From mortal limitations burst ;
Shall not our second life contain
Like things, but better than the first ?

THE WINDSTORM.

THE sun has gone, defeated by the night,
But his retreat was dignified and bright ;
And on the mount he leaves a radiant spy
To warn the evening of a tempest nigh.

A heavy silence stills the feathered throng,
Not e'en the river laps its wonted song ;
Save for the bittern's cry, the earth is still
On swamp and river, mount and lesser hill.

But, listen ! O'er the mountain's frowning head
I hear the tempest's clamour, faint and dread ;
No whisper stirs among the lilac bowers,
Nor shakes the perfume from the lily flowers.

So we retire ; but yet my ears are tense
To catch the storm's increasing vehemence,
Till down the mountain's singing rocks it sweeps,
And on the star-shot Derwent tide it leaps.

I hear the water hissing 'neath its lash,
And breaking wavelets on the boat-house splash ;
And now the house is caught in fierce embrace,
And shaken to its deep foundation's base.

The chimneys roar at each repeated blow,
The walls of stone seem rocking to and fro ;
Then on the tempest passes with a shriek,
Its fury on the hapless trees to wreak.

I hear it through the forest-people sing,
Each stem vibrates like bass Æolian string ;
The leaves and branches play the melody,
These mighty tones are made accompany.

The river still is sobbing like a child,
Whose mother punished, then forgave, and smiled ;
But dead the storm, or racing o'er the seas,
While mount and river rest in moonlit peace.

LINES WRITTEN ON A SABBATH EVEN-
ING AT SORRENTO, NOVEMBER, 1899.

THROUGH window lifted high I hear the thrush,
Who whistles from the native currant bush,
His even-song of living pure delight,
And sups upon the berries sweet and white.

The wrens, with all their merry chirruping,
Give to the stronger notes an echoing ;
And all this fantasy of sound is laid
On softer groundwork by the insects made.

And through the window comes the sunset steam
Of stocks and pinks, that in the garden dream ;
And with it blends the ti-tree's honeyed breath,
That tells of daylight's oft-recurring death.

And now the songs are hushed, and gone the day,
I listen to the murmur of the bay,
And to the distant ocean's monotone,
Borne forth as from a mighty organ blown.

At noon to-day I stood above the sea,
And heard the rollers breaking restlessly ;
The sun was gilding everything with light,
The flowing tide was rising in its might.

'Twas solemn, yet excitement stirred within,
To hear the ocean's roar and grinding din,
And all my nature cried—"O, Mighty Lord,
Who can resist Thee when the wave's Thy sword?"

But here and now the active element
Gives room to peace, the more magnificent
Because it liveth, though serenely calm,
As lives the body 'mid its slumber's balm.

Whene'er I feel the sacred influence
Of Nature's joyful sounds or silence tense,
My soul arises in a thankful prayer,
That all around me should be made so fair.

O, Lord of all conditions and all ways,
Thou hast with creature comforts filled my days,
And just as if my measure flowed not o'er,
Hast added yet two sweeter blessings more.

The things that do delight the nobler part,
The things that hallow and enrich the heart ;
And with them sent the precious faculty
Of feeling beauty when it touches me.

FAIR THINGS OF EARTH.

FAIR things of earth !
O, let us by your lovely gifts be taught
How wondrously the hand of God hath wrought !
And let us learn to see on every side
The meanest thing that liveth dignified,
Divine by birth.

In such a mood,
Upon the rocky flats that edge the shore,
We wandered 'mid the ocean's solemn roar,
She lending eyes to see and words to show
The fairy-tales of Nature, while, aglow,
I near her stood.

Our moisty way
We trod through mimic groves of ocean weed,
Round tiny bays, where stubborn rocks impede,
But conquer not, the onward flowing tide.
Then she a limpid, crystal pool espied,
Sunlit and gay.

We knelt to read
In this sweet book the story of the sea ;
So clear the water, that it seemed to be
But glass above a living picture laid,
A picture where a thousand creatures played
Among the weed.

Rich brown and red,
With here and there a frond of velvet green,
In this subaqueous meadow could be seen ;
And 'neath the shade a greedy crab in state
Waited with horny claws to deal out fate
On some poor head.

But, best of all,
Amid the charms of this enchanting bower
There grew a rosy-tinted living flower,
Its centre to the golden sunshine spread ;
Its dainty petals, slender as a thread,
Did rise and fall.

We dipped a hand
Within the pool, and broke its bright repose,
And, quicker than the eye could see it close,
The fair anemone its arms withdrew,
Leaving a tiny knob of doubtful hue
Upon the sand.

But when once more
The pool was calm, and spread the rosy rays,
We held our hands, and let it take its ways,
Until the petals should be folded fast
Against the rushing tide that hurries past,
And up the shore.

Then said my friend—
“ If but our hearts could have the noble will,
Like this small creature, at the approach of ill,
To close against its very sign and sound,
How often could we from a stinging wound
Ourselves defend.”

TO THE AUSTRALIAN PIONEER.

COME, join in a lay, all Australia's sons,
And sing to the praise of the notable ones
Who gave us this land of the fair and the good,
And decked with fair homesteads its wide solitude.

Their pioneer valour must not go unsung
By us, who are proud from such men to have
sprung ;
So hear, while I tell what they did in their day,
For theirs are the honours that never decay.

Upon the long billows the rolling ship rocks,
And daintily poising, the lapping sea mocks ;
But those she is bearing out over the wave
Have hearts that are sad as the hearts at a grave.

Through tear-mists they gaze on the dear, fading
shore,
Each feeling his eyes shall behold it no more ;
O, think of the wrenching of all the life ties,
The hope and the fear as the parting day dies !

The searcher may find on the deck a young bride,
And he, her first chosen, is mute at her side,
No comfort affording her desolate heart,
That tingles and throbs at the leave-taking smart.

A double adventure to her is this day,
A partner untried and a land far away ;
Do ever we think what our mothers endured
Before this fair country to us was assured ?

And then the long voyage, with all its disgust,
The mixture of temper that breedeth mistrust ;
The landing with nothing but hands that can toil,
And seed to replenish the rich, virgin soil.

The struggle with home-sickness, poverty, pain,
The pitiful passes when fell not the rain,
The terror when bush fires glared all around,
To leave where the harvest stood smoking black
ground.

And shall these afflictions with us count for naught,
For whom they have laboured and suffered and
fought ?

Nay, native-born worthies, wherever we fail,
Let not a cold silence our gratitude veil.

We praise well the battle by sea and by land,
Nor grudge our best honours for bravery's hand ;
No less to our valorous sires we owe,
Whose watch-word was "Courage," though blood-
less the foe.

Not roused by the cannon or cavalry rush,
But all in the silence of Nature's deep hush,
Their victory gaining, as day followed day,
With resolute arm sweeping failure away.

And what have they won by the sacrifice made ?
This, friend, if results shall be properly weighed,
For England a daughter, resourceful and fair,
For us a rich country to cherish with care.

BIRD'S-NESTING.

WITH merry laugh and eager hands
We plucked the long clematis strands
About the ti-tree clinging,
For we had spied some clustered bloom,
Just spreading out its seed-time plume,
And ready for the winging.

But when the treasure we possessed,
We found a tiny songster's nest
Upon its stems suspended ;
Three pretty eggs, of soft green shade,
Within its mossy cup were laid,
By shading leaves defended.

And in the scrub the parent bird,
Calling distressfully, we heard,
O'er all her labour wasted ;
And we were sorry to have spoiled
The joy for which the bird had toiled,
And yet had never tasted.

THE PAST AND THE PRESENT DAY.

IN day-dream I heard a learnéd priest
Of Egypt, the glory of the East,
Addressing a modern seer.
Comparing his day with the present times,
His country with those of Western climes,
To the grief of the latter, I fear.

“ My vision o'er thousands of years,” he said,
“ With the lamp of knowledge in hand hath sped,
To things of the future day ;
Ne'er dreaming of our antiquity,
They boast of each new discovery
With veriest child's display.

“ Parading their wisdom, science, power,
They claim as inventions of the hour
What our priests for ages knew ;
The use of the chemist's magic store,
Of the terrible thunder's deafening roar,
And the lightning's livid blue.

" Those were the sacred gifts of God,
Only to men of the priestly blood,
For ruling the baser sort.

Knowledge made common is profaned,
The heavenly by the earthly stained—
So set ye its price at nought.

" O, show me, thou man of the future years,
If in thy declining age appears
Aught like our Memphian graves ;
Our temple of Thebes, with porch ornate,
And Moeris, whose channels irrigate
The plain where the Nile flood laves.

" Your science and art shall all decay,
Your monuments crumble and waste away,
Obeying the ages' call ;
But, long as the Nile in its course shall flow,
And long as the sun on its throne shall glow,
Our labours shall never fall."

Then quietly spoke our Western friend,
The things of the present to defend,
And he did it with a will.

" 'Tis right that you boast your monuments ;
I own that we know but the rudiments
Of your architectural skill.

" Your study embraced a wider plain,
Your knowledge was drawn from deeper vein
 Than that by our mighty used ;
But not for the good of all ye wrought,
To cudgel the weaker mind ye sought,
 And thus were your gifts abused.

" But greater than Thebes' unrivalled pride,
And Moeris, with fresh perennial tide,
 Or Pyramids' lofty peak,
Are mercy and truth in the modern eyes,
And justice that bids the soul arise,
 And champions the poor and weak.

" Behold we these tokens of ancient skill,
And shudder to think of the frightful ill
 Committed that these be reared ;
We listen and hear the horrid thud
Of taskmaster's whip, all stained with blood
 From the shoulders of victims seared.

" The heavily-burdened women weep,
Or misery end with death's long sleep
 In the silently-flowing Nile ;
Starvation looks out from every eye,
Men toil and they mourn, and long to die,
 All hating each other the while.

"O, prove me this right if you but can,
And why man should take his brother man
 And make him a slave, a beast ;
But if you perform not my request,
. Then proved are the later days the best,
 The Western before the East."

ADDRESSED TO LIGHT MEN.

THE man on whose unseemly tongue
A woman's name is lightly hung,
Who holds a woman's heart as nought,
A woman's love as but a thought,
Who thinks his handsome, smiling face
Sufficient to secure the grace
Of every woman he may meet,
And bring her humbly to his feet—

To him I could not condescend
To give the sacred name of friend,
For I should judge a tainted mind
Must lie his doubtful jests behind.
This man will smile with cynic mien,
And vent his witticism keen
On every wish or hope unfurled
In woman's heart to save the world.

Upon a lady's courtesy
He waits with patient gravity,
Her converse heeding with delight,
With sighs for sad and smiles for bright.
Then, with his comrades met once more,
He tells her simple stories o'er,
With gross interpretations blent,
Construing harm where none was meant.

Unhappy he whose blunted soul
Has never felt the sweet control,
The purifying, holy beam
Of woman's friendship and esteem.
But while a noble woman hears,
In disrespectful jests and jeers,
Her sex forever put to shame,
And branded deep with folly's name,
She cannot bring herself to show
Her heart to him who speaketh so,
Constrained in self-defence to shun
The company of such a one.

If there are women void of sense,
Who take their fun at men's expense,
There are a thousand others yet
Who merit not the scorn they get.
And none of these would dare reject
All manly homage and respect,
Nor would they grudge to give their part,
A reverent, sympathetic heart.

CHILDREN AT PLAY.

IT was a garden running wild,
The emblem of an unschooled child,
 Where they so gladly played ;
And o'er the path a monthly rose
Reached out to kiss a sister rose,
 With many a blossom sprayed.

Two of the children shook the trees,
Until the petals filled the breeze
 With showers of pink and white ;
While through the gap the other sped,
And strove to keep her childish head
 That none should on it light.

But every time she passed the bough,
Upon her hair and upturned brow
 The leaves did softly rain ;
O, happy child, if but your hours
Are touched thus lightly by the flowers
 Of life, and not its pain.

Where are the children of the game ?
Two are among us but a name ;
 And she whose hasty feet

Strove to escape the falling bloom
Has still on earth allotted room,
Though grown to years discreet.

The flowers still upon her rest,
And all unhidden kiss her breast,
The flowers of blessings sweet—
Of talents and affection's part,
And dearer still, a happy heart,
The woes of life to meet.

WHO SHALL BE MY FRIEND ?

O, what is the standard of friendship ?
I ask, can we set it too high ?
And where is the limit of service,
The loveliest sign of that tie ?

What order of man must my friend be ?
What qualities rare in him dwell ?
What influence mutual existing ?
What subtle, unnamable spell ?

My friend in me seeth the goodness,
Although to my faults never blind ;
When misunderstood by all others,
He listens attentive and kind.

In all things not always agreeing,
Indeed, oft with differences warm,
And voices more loud than accordant,
But loving no less for a storm.

He never presumes on our union,
For then would that union end ;
Presumption gives birth to resentment,
E'en though it be found in a friend.

If of me he cannot speak praises,
He never will stoop to speak ill ;
'Tis sad when a friend with small chatter
The mouth of the gossip will fill.

Whenever there's cause for fault-finding,
He bravely rebukes, face to face ;
Though I for a moment resent it,
Soon anger gives penitence place.

O, show me the true and the loving,
The soul who to sin never bends,
The high-minded, patient, courageous—
And these will I gladly call friends.

SHE IS YOUR MOTHER.

If she's not quite as dainty in foot and hand
As your delicate culture might demand,
If lacking that dignity you think grand,
Still, girls, she is your mother.

If the eyes are duller, the dear head grey,
If she will have things done in her own old way,
If she thinks, as in childhood, you ought to obey,
Still, girls, she is your mother.

If she talks too loudly in company
About her coming across the sea,
About the hard times that used to be,
Still, girls, she is your mother.

If even the careless can detect
The sound of her county's dialect,
It is no excuse for your neglect,
For, girls, she is your mother.

If sometimes her temper's a little short,
And hard words are uttered ere stayed by thought,
And your rising anger must oft be fought,
Still, girls, she is your mother.

Have you quite forgotten the day when you
Determined your own sweet will to do,
And who it was that restrained you, too ?

Why, girls, it was your mother.

How oft your naughtiness put her to shame,
And still she loved you just the same,
Has she no reason your love to claim
Because she is your mother ?

O, girls, dear girls, make smooth to the grave
The path of her who has been so brave,
And many a pang you thus may save
From reaching the heart of mother.

WHITE FLOWERS.

O, what have you brought to deck the brow—
The brow of the bashful bride ;
To shadow the wistful, drooping eyes,
With their parting tears undried ?
We bring you white flowers to show how pure
Has been the maiden's life,
As emblems that she is still as pure,
Who is a holy wife.

O, what have you brought to deck the brow—
The brow of the silent dead,
As love-gifts to fill the marble hands,
And to strew the narrow bed ?
We have brought white flowers to show how pure
The soul must be to stand
Adoring the God of quick and dead
In the deathless spirit land.

How strange that you make the self-same things
The servants of joy and grief !
Are sorrow and gladness so alike,
So stirring, tense, and brief ?

'Tis so ; but the unstained blooms we bring
Are meant to show how grand
The purity of the living soul
That rests in God's great hand.

THE COMET.

MAY, 1901.

WHEN the fierce red of sunset died away,
And all the sky was but a starless grey,
We saw the maiden of the radiant hair,
Through viewless depths of space her glories
trailing,
A sheen of silver light her features veiling,
Her pace as stately as the fairest fair.

Wise men have taught us how to mark her way,
And those unbroken laws she must obey ;
But is there aught beside for certain known ?
And as we watched her through the heavens gliding,
We longed to know the secrets in her hiding,
To make her mines of knowledge all our own.

We wistfully inquired from whence she came
To pay her homage to our solar flame ;
What trackless wastes of airy ocean past,
And through what distant, gleaming constellation
She hastened onward in her isolation ;
And where this mystic voyage would end at last.

But men were silent ; she was silent, too,
As slowly, solemnly her course she drew ;
 And we must wait until the soul is free
To follow her to infinite recesses,
And stay the thirst for knowledge which possesses
 Each mind in contact with a mystery.

TO MY FRIEND, E. J. H., ON HER
BIRTHDAY.

THE wish that greets the birthday morn
Has aye an empty sound to me,
If I addressed it, friend, to thee,
Affection would be coldly borne.

To hope the day may oft return,
Would be but wishing what I know,
For living does not end below,
Nor Heaven the circling ages spurn.

I cannot wish thee happiness,
Full conscious that thou knowest its source,
That in thy Nature is the force
To gain from life its blessedness.

The exit from mortality
Is but the day of second birth,
A stepping outward from the earth,
From childhood to majority.

And if thy twice-born soul should rise
Ere thou hast reached thy perfect prime,
Or shouldst thou dwell the allotted time
Beneath our sun-enthroning skies ;

Thy birthdays still will come and go,
And still, I doubt not, thou wilt feel
My wish of love around thee steal,
As on thy birthdays here below.

LOVE SONG.

A GOLDEN gift I gave my love,
And gladly he received it,
And set the treasured thing above,
And praised and fondled it to prove
How precious he believed it.

It was a present strangely wrought,
And he, my love, misread it,
So, where a golden gift was brought,
A paler sheen his fancy caught,
And silvered o'er its credit.

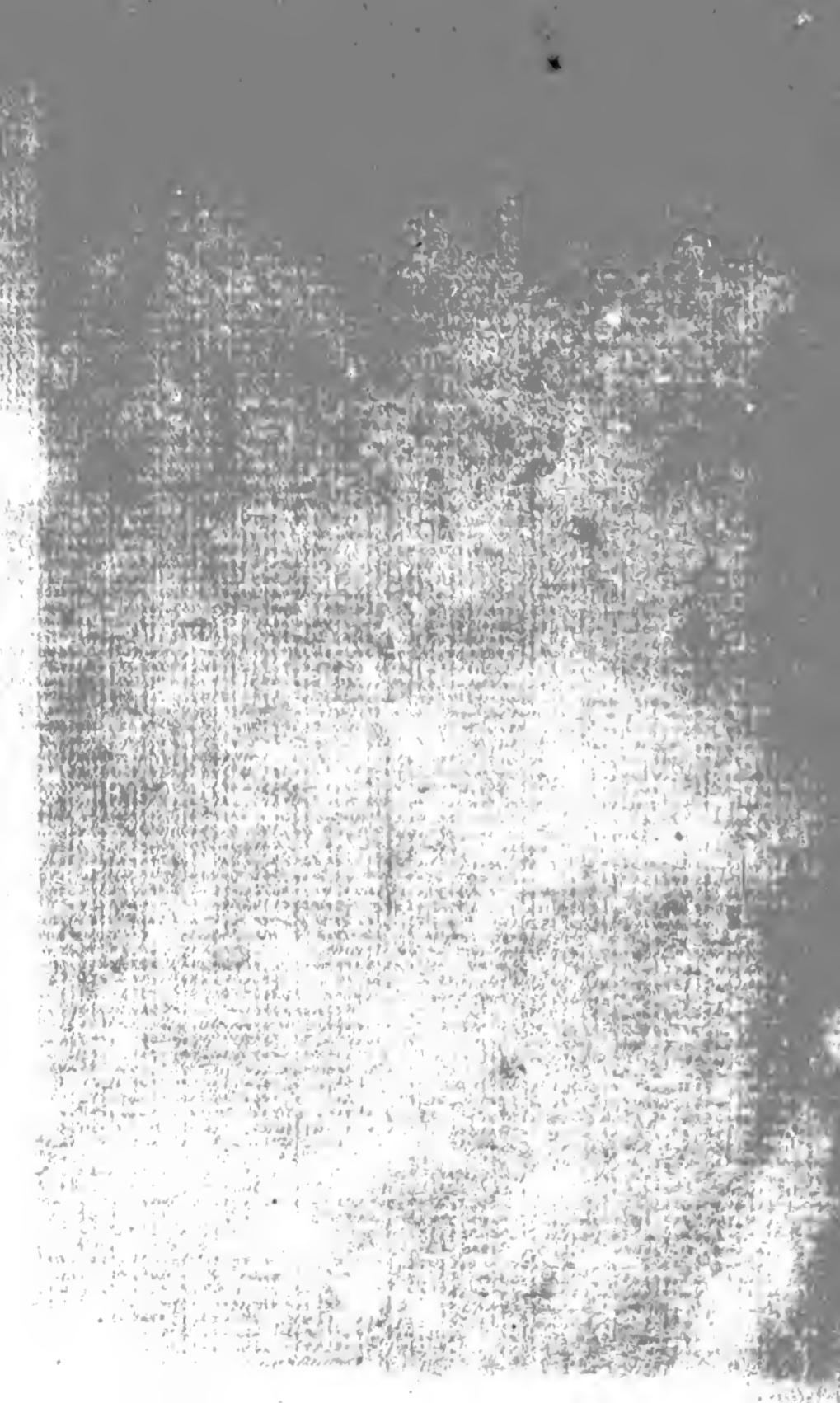
He knew not that the thing I gave
Was all my heart's devotion,
A reverence for his manners grave,
A willingness to be his slave—
And not a friend's emotion.

Yet that my love he did not spurn
Has banished my resentment ;
And though I fain would have him learn
How deep my heart must for him yearn,
My soul has found contentment.

I still can touch his friendly hand
With shameless admiration,
And feel the good in him demand
My best and noblest to expand,
To meet his approbation.

A kindly look, a gentle word,
Are favours taken lowly ;
But in the depths of passion stirred,
My love, a pool with face unblurred,
Lies tranquil, pure, and holy.







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